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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001550

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SUBJECT: TURKEY-AU SUMMIT OVERSHADOWED BY BASHIR'S  
PARTICIPATION

REF: A. ANKARA 148  
[1](#)B. ANKARA 953  
[1](#)C. ANKARA 1307  
[1](#)D. ANKARA 1364  
[1](#)E. ANKARA 1384

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The GOT-hosted Turkey-African Union (AU) Cooperation Summit, August 18-21, rendered no surprises. During the sessions, the GOT focused on developing good will, expanding trade ties, and lobbying for African support of Turkey's UNSC bid. Overall, the GOT was pleased with both attendance and the resulting summit documents outlining future engagement. On the margins, President Gul held 49 bilateral meetings with African leaders, including Sudanese President Bashir. The Turkish press, human rights groups, and opposition parties aggressively criticized the GOT for providing Bashir a platform one month after his International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The GOT hosted delegations from 48 AU member nations, Morocco, and thirteen international organizations at the Turkey-Africa Union Cooperation Summit in Istanbul, August 18-21, MFA Africa Section Chief Aykut Kumbaroglu told us. (Note: Mozambique, Swaziland, Liberia, Western Sahara, and Lesotho did not attend. The GOT does not recognize Western Sahara.) Despite strong GOT pressure on African nations to send highest-level representation, six heads-of-government represented the AU, as initially proposed by the organization. In addition, Sudanese President Bashir and Moroccan PM el Fassi independently joined the Summit. In total, six presidents, five vice presidents, seven prime ministers, one deputy minister, 14 foreign ministers, and 12 other ministers attended, said Kumbaroglu, adding the GOT was pleased with participation levels.

[1](#)3. (SBU) While the August 18 senior officials and foreign ministers meetings were light on substance, the summit communiqu and the cooperation framework document established parameters for future Turkish-African engagement. Per the declaration, the GOT will host additional summits every five years, with an undefined high-level 2010 meeting to occur in Africa. The cooperation framework document established nine areas for the GOT to work with the AU: intergovernmental cooperation; trade and investment; agriculture, agribusiness, rural development, water resource management, and small to medium sized enterprises (SME); health; peace and security; infrastructure, energy, and transport; culture, tourism, and education; media and information and communication

technology; and the environment. Both documents can be found on the Summit webpage (<http://africa.mfa.gov.tr>).

¶4. (SBU) Kumbargolu reported President Gul held 49 bilats on the margins, including a highly controversial meeting with Sudanese President Bashir. In addition, the GOT signed two bilateral agreements: a trade and economic cooperation agreement with the Angolan Government and an aviation agreement with the Senegalese Government. In a private tte--tte, the media reported Gul requested Bashir's assistance in facilitating Turkish firms' investments in Sudan, specifically in the energy sector, and pledged additional Turkish assistance with health issues there (ref a).

¶5. (SBU) Bashir's participation drew swift criticism from the Turkish press and human right groups, which attacked the GOT for being the first government to receive the Sudanese President after his July 14 ICC indictment. During a press conference at his hotel, Bashir dismissed the charges of genocide, pointing to the absence of graves as evidence of his innocence. He rejected ICC legal jurisdiction, asserted Sudanese law is based on Sharia principles, and said Sudan would never surrender any citizen to the ICC. Bashir also claimed that he was charged because he opposes the "U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq." With the notable exception of the Islamist press, the Turkish media focused almost exclusively on Bashir, acknowledging the Summit only as backdrop. Many journalists gave particular focus to President Gul's conciliatory statements regarding Sudan and his decision to refer to Darfur as a "tragedy" instead of a genocide or atrocity. Reflecting the public's ire, opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Ahmet Ersin submitted a questioning motion to the Parliamentary Speaker

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demanding PM Erdogan and President Gul explain why the GOT has twice invited Bashir to Turkey in the last year, adding that such an action "disturbs the image of the country."

¶6. (SBU) The Turkish private sector held two Africa-related conferences parallel to the Summit. Jointly organized by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK), the Turkish-African Business Forum in Istanbul examined economic cooperation opportunities and established a Turkey-Africa Chamber of Commerce (ref b). In addition to the Union of African Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Professions (UACCIAP), businessmen from 29 African nations participated in the conference. One week prior, the think-tank Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (TASAM) hosted the Turkish-African Civil Societies Forum, also in Istanbul. Over 90 African and 85 Turkish groups affirmed a declaration calling for enhanced cooperation in the areas of gender-neutral economic development, trade, education and health, democratization, human rights, good governance, tourism, the environment, science and technology, energy, youth and the family, and peace and stability.

¶7. (C) Comment: The Turkey-AU Cooperation Summit represents the last big push in the GOT's efforts to woo African support for its 2008-2010 UNSC seat bid. Nevertheless, after the October vote has come and gone, Turkey's increasing business ties to the continent will mandate some level of sustained GOT engagement. Turkish Muslim-oriented SME owners and organizations such as the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) are reportedly putting heavy pressure on the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which derives a notable level of financial support from these businessmen, to develop a robust African foreign policy to address their commercial and expatriate concerns.

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